

# Dancing up close and personal

By HELEN KAYE

Feathers. Heaps of white feathers. And when Rina Schenfeld walks on stage between the two giant video screens that are both set and part of *Close Up* (Karov), she holds more feathers in each upraised fist, feathers that drift slowly, pristine in intersecting lights, to the feather covered floor.

*Close Up* is her latest work, a solo piece she has created in collaboration with Italian video artist Paulo Atzori, and the feathers are only one of the symbols in it.

Birds have feathers, and "a woman is like a bird," she says. "She has this primitive urge to fly. She tries, and she falls a lot, and the feathers moult which is a metaphor for time."

Time, yes. Time as the enemy, the thief, the spoiler. In *Close Up* the woman rages, beats against the ravages of time, will not "go gentle into that good night." She fights the threats to her physical being, to her creativity and then the acceptance and the idea that what is left may be imbued with new riches slowly come.

Schenfeld accepts this interpretation but suggests that "it's not so much a battle that I win, but another rung on the ladder of understanding, because if we're lucky and if we try, we can learn and develop all our lives."

The piece developed "from a need to get closer to the audience, and vice versa, and also closer to the other. It began from working with small movements of the

hands and face. I'd go into the studio and work opposite a video camera. This is very intimate work, because the camera can record what the eye can't. Working with the video helped me to create a whole new language of face and hands."

Her collaboration with Atzori had its genesis at last year's Israel Festival when she saw the work he had done for Michele Noiret's *In Between*. Local videographer Nili Atzlan filmed four hours "of all different material," which Atzori took to his studio in Germany and transmuted.

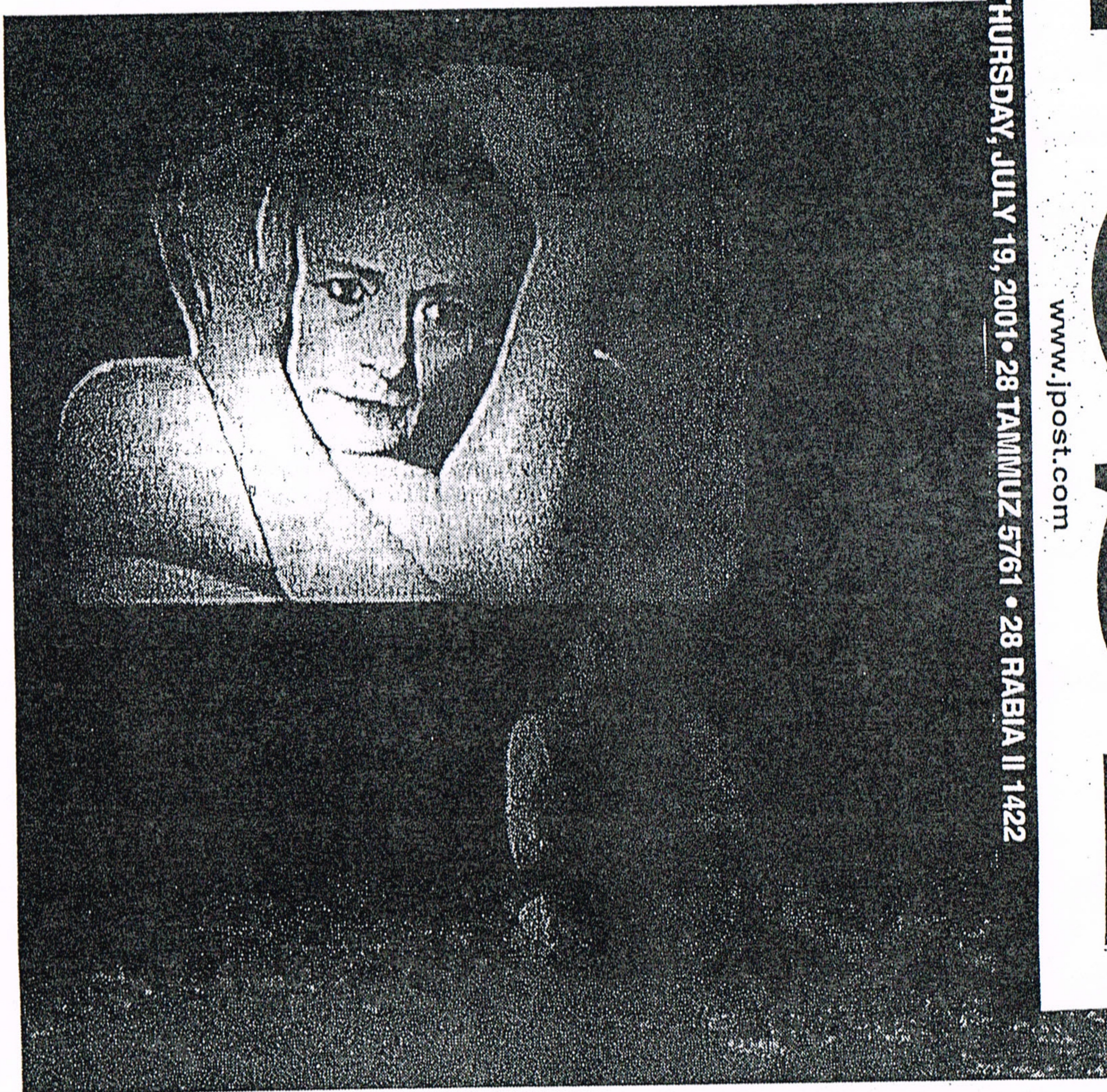
The images on the two screens complement Schenfeld's movements as do the soundtrack and the objects she uses – objects that are always themselves and yet symbols of, or metaphors for, the ideas that fuel her work.

Her spiritual mentors are Martha Graham – from whose company the late Bathsheba de Rothschild plucked her, in 1963, to be principal dancer and artistic director of the newly formed Batsheva Dance – and Merce Cunningham.

At 80, and mostly in a wheelchair these days, Cunningham is still at the cutting edge of contemporary dance.

Schenfeld went to Holland recently to see him, and "what I saw in those two weeks made me want to work with people again." She laughs. "And after I work with people, I want to do something alone."

*Close Up* will be at the Suzanne Dellal Dance Center Sunday and Monday at 9 p.m. as part of the MahoLohet festival.



Rina Schenfeld gets close to the audience in *Close Up* at Suzanne Dellal next week.

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